

JOSEPH CLARK BALDWIN



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January 22, 1952

Dear Bedell,

Thank you very very much for your letter of the 15th. I am immensely gratified at your opinion: that there is a genuine need for some kind of action along the indicated lines. Incidentally, by way of keeping you and the CIA informed, I send you some revised material herewith.

Naturally, I am in touch with Nelson Rockefeller and hope in some way to enlist his interest.

I want you to know that if there is any way in which we can be of help to the CIA, you need only call upon us; and if there is any body whom you think we ought to obtain for the Board, all you need do is just pass the word along.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

  
Joseph Clark Baldwin

General Walter B. Smith  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington 25, D. C.

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NAME: American Institute for the Tropics.

PURPOSE: A non-profit, educational agency to serve the mutual interests of the American people and the peoples of tropical lands.

BACKGROUND: The tropical lands represent a twentieth-century world frontier. By climate, soil, sun energy, population and common problems in erosion, irrigation and transportation, they are, in considerable measure, a distinctive grouping calling for a distinctive approach.

Many, if not most, of these countries are, as yet, underdeveloped, as to their full potential in production or in the satisfaction of their needs. While their soil fertility and sub-soil resources are known to be considerable, problems of disease, human and animal; of malnutrition; of irrigation, reclamation, transportation and capital investment have to be solved. As they are solved, there would follow an advance in their productivity and their standards of living; and increased trade and economic advantages for the United States and for the world at large.

The tropical lands are, moreover, of growing importance because of the rapidity of air transportation. Tropical health and disease developments, for example, must now increasingly be taken into account in the temperate zone.

There is no American organization with an inclusive concern and program for the tropics in terms of the manifold, complex needs and possibilities. Yet United States relations with tropical countries are already considerable. More than one half of United States exports to and imports from abroad are with countries of the tropical and sub-tropical zones.

At the same time, it has become of paramount importance for the best traditions of democracy and enlightened private enterprise to take root in the tropics and thereby to interpose obstacles to the acceptance of the glib promises of a Communist utopia. Without the friendship and help of the Western world the countries of the tropical zone will be drawn into the Communist orbit. Already the agents of Communism are developing attitudes in tropical countries which, if unchallenged, may lead to their full association with the world Communist movement. The alternative is to posit the values of the democratic Western world in terms of effective action; of mutual effort so helpful and worthy as to compel a choice for the democratic way of life. And that action must not be delayed.

Under the Point IV Program and in other ways, a number of United States governmental activities are and, hopefully, will be carried on, with and in behalf of tropical countries. It would, however, be alien to our tradition and self-defeating from the viewpoint of our national interests for contact with those lands

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to be exclusively or even largely restricted to official activity. Reliance on such a relationship counters a prevailing, deep-rooted American sentiment for limitations on government power. Moreover, it involves the jeopardy of the seeming interference by one government in the domestic affairs of another; a seed of fear and distrust that is particularly troublesome in countries pulsating with zealous local nationalism.

The essential supplement and corrective to even the most acceptable United States Government programs are at hand in the activities of private groups and individuals in American life with a natural affinity for actual or prospective counterparts in the tropical countries. Such groups would include farm, soil and other agricultural experts; industrial statesmen and potential developers of industry; commercial interests; engineers; educators; labor leaders; medical, health and sanitation specialists; economists and other analysts, and a multitude of civic groups. Their association with and help to tropical countries are likely to achieve wholesome results unattainable by official protocol. In the process, they can convey a greater knowledge of the United States; and induce a reservoir of good-will and identity with the American people.

The program of the American Institute for the Tropics is designed to stimulate, encourage, aid and channel these beneficent mutual contacts and interests.

PROGRAM: Information to the American people as to developments in our growing interdependence with tropical countries and peoples.

Information in tropical lands as to the American people, our achievements in behalf of, and interest in, tropical lands and peoples.

The assembly of research and data on tropical lands on which to base projects to advance the well-being of the peoples of the tropics.

The organization of conferences to study and evaluate needs and possibilities.

Service as a clearing house of information to reputable organizations, companies, and individuals concerned with bettering relations between the United States and tropical lands and peoples.

Exchanges of personnel; and development of training projects in agricultural and industrial skills, in public administration, and to meet health and cultural needs.

Suitable exhibits, here and abroad, of progress in those lands; and of United States interest in them.

The issuance of a news bulletin and the enlistment of the informational and interpretive services of the press and lecture platforms, radio and television facilities, here and in tropical countries.

Collaboration with organizations interested or capable of being interested in tropical lands and peoples.

Cooperation with the U. S. Government; governments in the tropical countries; the United Nations; and with other reputable international agencies.

(Excerpt from letter by Hon. Joseph Clark Baldwin)

January, 1952

You are entirely right that a good deal of spade work has been done and is being done by specialized agencies of the United Nations and of the United States and by various foundations. It is, of course, our intention to utilize all such data and to develop practical services and projects based on this spade work.

We are also in touch with Washington; and I can tell you that there is a considerable sympathy in government circles for what we have in prospect. Naturally, we will continue to work closely with the State Department.

Much remains to be done in developing the organization and its effective administration; and on some aspects, I could not now, in all candor, speak with assurance. We expect to explore possibilities patiently and thoroughly; and do only those things that need doing and that no other organization is on hand to take on.

There are, however, a few basic considerations on which I and my associates feel strongly and with which I hope you would be in accord.

1. There is our conviction as to the importance of the tropics to United States (and world) economy and to United States national interests. Because we are firmly of this belief and have found that there is no one organization in the United States that concerns itself with the tropics (there is a fuller history of activity in that field by England and France) we feel it important to get started.
2. With equal strength of feeling, we are convinced that private (profit-making and non-profit-making) groups of Americans must play a considerable part in our relations with the tropics. Exclusive or excessive governmental activity is harmful alike, for those lands and for our country. Yet, vast governmental activity will become inevitable, if private groups do not pitch in.
3. We also feel strongly that it is of increasing importance that the peoples of the tropical lands know what the United States and its institutions have done, are doing, can, and are willing to, do for them. There is, already, insofar as we have been able to study the subject, an impressive record of American achievements in economic developments, health, schooling, training, and increased standards, -- a record which is either not known at all or which has been twisted and warped by sinister

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influences. We believe that this educational function cannot and should not be performed by United States government agencies alone. Nor can private business do that story justice. Private companies, operating in those areas or who may do so in the future, have drastic limitations on their own telling of their own story. In part, this is due to the fact that they cannot appear as disinterested disseminators of the truths that need to be known. In this respect, an outside, public, non-profit-making organization can render an invaluable service.

4. Similarly, we believe that there is considerable room for improvement in spreading the facts among United States businessmen, engineers, health experts, and others, as to the importance of the tropics, our interdependence with them in terms of basic, national interests, and the development opportunities. As we can make a contribution towards this wider understanding, and as it sinks in, our relations with those lands will increase substantially under the impact of the snowballing of interest and activities.

These are our fundamental convictions. Our program will develop as by study, analysis, and trial and error we find our most productive functions.

On the whole, we are proceeding in the confident expectation that our project will be one road leading to Rome; that is, to a wider understanding by the American people of our interdependence with the tropics; to a wider appreciation by the tropical peoples of U. S. interest and helpfulness to them; and to practical projects that will help build up resistance to Communist influence. If we do our job right -- as we will -- our road to those objectives can be a broad and well-travelled highway.

We expect to have a modest administrative budget, enough to carry on the administration, contacts and negotiations and the basic informational activity. Beyond that, it is our plan to conceive and develop projects; and in each case to set about, as a catalyst, to enlist the required financial and other resources.

Our plan is to have the organization ultimately consist of a Board of Directors of some 25 people with whom we would try to associate a larger, general citizens committee. The authority and responsibility of the Board would, however, be determinate. We hope and shall strive to have a Board of reasonably like-minded people, possessed of a genuine interest in the tropical countries and in our national stake in those lands and peoples; with a sound international point of view, animated at the very least, by enlightened self-interest; and with a sober, practical temperament. The Board will consist of people in the field of scholarship and research; leading figures in public life; and a number of business leaders endowed with industrial statesmanship.

It may be that among your own associates, there is one with a knowledge of the tropics, an interest in their development and an awareness of the United States national stake involved, with whom we might be in close touch on our program as it develops. If so, I would welcome your advice and help in the enlistment of his interest.